



## Silver Springs State Park Real Florida Guide

Note: Colored numbers correspond with numbers on the map and represent destinations. **Red** = Days 1-3, **Green** = Other Activities.

Silver Springs has been a huge attraction in Florida for more than a century-and-a-half, starting when 19<sup>th</sup> century steamboats churned up the Ocklawaha and Silver Rivers with throngs of visitors. An 1855 poster advertised stagecoach rides to the springs from the Palatka area, and by the 1880s, trains were carrying passengers there. To learn more about the history of this magnificent springs as an attraction and other historic Florida attractions that are now Florida state parks, visit the [Wish You Were Here itinerary](#).



[Silver Springs State Park](#) is located at the headwaters of the Silver River. There are three entrances to this state park. The main entrance (**1**) is located on State Road 40 at 5656 East Silver Springs Boulevard, Silver Springs, FL 34488. The camping & museum entrance (**2**) is located on State Road 35 at 1425 NE 58th Avenue, Ocala FL 34470. The equestrian entrance (**3**) is located approximately 1.3 miles east of the Main Entrance on State Road 40.

Choose from the options below to plan your adventures while making the state park a comfortable home base for a three-day stay or longer. The park offers a 59-site full-facility campground and 10 modern cabins. To reserve a cabin or campsite, please visit



## [Reserve America.](#)

### Day 1

At the main entrance enjoy an easy stroll around the headspring from a viewing deck, walk along the river on paved trails, and see the ornamental gardens. Visitors can enjoy a sweet shop, breakfast and lunch and adult beverages from the restaurant with a view of the spring.

Glass bottom boat rides and Boat tours run every 30-45 minutes from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily. Reservations are not necessary. Rides are \$11 for adults, \$10 for seniors and youth (over 55 or under 17 years old), while children under 5 years old ride free.



Canoe and kayak rentals are offered through the park's concessionaire. There is a \$4.00 per boat launch fee if you bring your own canoe or kayak at the headspring launch. For more information call 352-261-5842 or visit the [concessionaire's website.](#)

Discovery Kayak Tours, a private off-park concessionaire offers guided half day kayak tours of the Silver River. All trips include guide service, instruction, boat, paddle, life jacket, dry bag, coolers, snacks and FUN. Call 352-789-4959 or visit their website at [www.discoverykayaktours.com](http://www.discoverykayaktours.com).

Silver Springs State Parks hosts both nationally recognized entertainment names and local acts in its Twin Oaks Amphitheater. Check the events page frequently to learn about upcoming shows. Concert tickets are sold through the [park's concessionaire.](#) Not only used for concerts, the amphitheater may be rented and is frequently





used to provide entertainment during festivals and holidays. It is a wonderful place to bring a camp chair and enjoy the entertainment in a fantastic setting.

The staff of Silver Springs State Park offers monthly programs such as Florida Safari Tram Tours, Cracker Village Tours, guided hikes, and many other programs. See the state park's [Park Events](#) website for a full list, dates and times or call the Parks Service Specialist at 352-236-7148.

The [Friends of Silver River State Park](#) is a volunteer, not-for-profit support organization that holds frequent educational programs and activities at the park along with volunteer workdays. Check their website for the events schedule.

The main entrance offers access to the newly created **Creek Trail**, a .75-mile loop that can be accessed behind the large pavilion. Visitors must first walk through the gardens to access the creek trail. Also accessible from the main entrance is the **Spring Trail**, blazed light blue, which connects the main entrance and headsprings area to the camping and Silver River Museum area via the **Sandhill Trail** (yellow) and the **Sinkhole Trail** (red). This trail is 2.3 miles ONE-WAY and 4.6 miles round-trip.

## Day 2

The camping entrance of the park is home to a 19th century pioneer "Cracker" settlement as well as the Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Center. The center is operated by the Marion County School District in cooperation with the park and open to the public on weekends and holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission to the museum is \$2.00 per person. Children under age 6 are free. The





museum is composed of a main museum and a history wing. The main museum exhibits Florida geology, paleontology, archaeology and natural history. The history wing exhibits Marion County and Florida history since written records became available with the arrival of the first European explorers.

From the camping entrance visitors can paddle down the Silver River (there is no fee to launch from this ramp, but there is a half mile hike to the launch area). Bring your own watercraft – rentals are not available. This entrance also has a picnic area that features three pavilions available for rent on a first-come first-serve basis, with grills and a playground nearby. There is access to five hiking/nature trails. The **Sandhill Trail**, blazed yellow, has parking right next to the park's Ranger Station, and is a 1.7-mile loop trail. This trail takes visitors through some of the park's longleaf pine uplands.



The **Sinkhole Trail**, blazed red, is a 2.2-mile loop trail, and the **Old Field Loop** is 0.8-miles. These are both upland trails. The **Swamp Trail**, blazed orange, is a 1.9-mile loop trail, and the **River Trail**, blazed dark blue, is 1.3-miles. Both trails begin in the uplands before transitioning to wetland habitats and both of them offer scenic overlooks of the Silver River. Numerous unmarked service roads and fire breaks intersect the trails so make sure to remain on marked and posted trails to avoid becoming lost.

### Day 3

From the equestrian entrance the Silver Springs State Park horse trail traverses a wetland habitat. Unless there are drought conditions, the visitor can expect areas of mud and standing water along the trails. Summer seasons feature biting insects;



please plan accordingly. If you do not have your own horse, [Cactus Jack's Trail Rides](#) offers guided trail rides for groups or individuals (6 years old and up) through the state park and on the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. Visit the website or call for reservations at 352-266-9326.

### Other Activities

The [Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway](#) stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Johns River. This greenway occupies much of the land formerly known as the Cross Florida Barge Canal, now a 110-mile corridor offering an array of trail-types (paved, unpaved, and hard packed surface) with recreation opportunities for hikers, bikers and equestrians to experience Florida's variety of natural habitats. Remember to dress appropriately and bring plenty of water, sunblock, insect repellent and anything else you need to be comfortable. For more tips on gear for longer hikes, check out the [American Hiking Society's top 10 essentials of hiking](#).

The [Marshall Swamp Trailhead](#) (4) connects to the Silver Springs State Park and then back to the [Florida National Scenic Trail](#). Parking is available at the Greenway's Sharpe's Ferry Road office on County Road 314.

The SE 64th Avenue Trailhead (5) provides parking and access to the paved and unpaved trails where they connect, offering an easy opportunity to experience two very different types of trails.

[The Baseline Road Trailhead](#) (6) features a 5-mile, paved multi-use trail that is situated



along former pastures which are being restored to the original longleaf pine sandhill community. This trailhead is managed by Marion County Parks and Recreation and offers parking and amenities including a Boundless Playground®, designed to enable children of all abilities to learn and play freely together.

Additionally, while driving to or from this area savor the slow roads and visit special places along the [Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway](#). This website provides information for in-depth tour of Central Florida's natural wonders and colorful history at your own pace.





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